File #: 250838, **Version:** 0

Amending Chapter 19-1300 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Real Estate Taxes," by providing for refunds of real estate taxes overpaid through rent by certain low income persons, directing the Revenue Department to develop procedures, guidelines, and forms whereby eligible taxpayers can obtain state and city refunds, and requiring property owners to provide informational materials to tenants; and amending Chapter 9-800 of the Philadelphia Code, entitled "Landlord and Tenant," by requiring landlords to complete and return Rent Certificates or other documentation necessary for tenants to apply for rent refund programs, prohibiting retaliation, and providing for enforcement and penalties; all under certain terms and conditions.

WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, through the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program, has long recognized that a portion of rent, set in statute as 20 percent, represents property tax passed through to tenants; and

WHEREAS, Homeowners receive meaningful relief through the City's Homestead Exemption and related property tax programs, but renters-who are similarly impacted by property tax burdens embedded in rent-are left without an equivalent form of local relief; and

WHEREAS, The Commonwealth's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program provides critical assistance to renters in need, but does not relieve eligible tenants of the entire 20 percent property tax burden that is passed down through their rent; and

WHEREAS, Critically, the Commonwealth's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program provides a 50 percent additional supplement to eligible homeowners in Philadelphia County, but does not provide this supplement to renters in Philadelphia County, demonstrating a crucial opportunity for additional City support; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, rents in Philadelphia have increased at a rate far outpacing wages, placing extraordinary strain on low-income households, especially seniors and those with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Seniors and Philadelphians with disabilities living on fixed incomes are among the most vulnerable to rising housing costs, yet currently have very limited options for relief from rent increases driven by property tax and other factors; and

WHEREAS, A city-level rent refund program, recognizing renters' overpayment of property taxes through rent, is necessary to strengthen the Commonwealth's framework, ensure that relief is equitably extended to renters, and help protect the affordability and stability of Philadelphia's housing market; now, therefore

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA HEREBY ORDAINS:

SECTION 1. Title 19 of The Philadelphia Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

TITLE 19. FINANCE, TAXES AND COLLECTIONS

* * *

CHAPTER 19-1300. REAL ESTATE TAXES

* * *

§ 19-1311. Philadelphia Rent Refund

(1) For purposes of this Section, the following terms have the following meanings:

(a) Eligible Renters. Renters of a residential rental property in the City of Philadelphia who has been approved to receive a rebate through the Pennsylvania Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program. Approval for such program shall be deemed proof that the renter has indirectly overpaid real estate taxes through rent.

(b) Philadelphia Rent Refund. An amount equal to one hundred percent (100%) of the total rebate granted to Eligible Renters through the Pennsylvania Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program. The Philadelphia Rent Refund shall be deemed a refund of real estate taxes overpaid through rent and shall be in addition to, and not in substitution for, benefits provided under the Pennsylvania Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program.

(2) Eligibility. Beginning January 1, 2026, each Eligible Renter shall receive the Philadelphia Rent Refund. The refund shall be treated as a City-funded refund of real estate taxes overpaid through rent and shall not alter the uniform rate of real estate taxation imposed by the City.

(3) Proof of Eligibility. Proof of approval for the Pennsylvania Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program shall automatically constitute approval for the Philadelphia Rent Refund, and no further application shall be required.

(4) Landlord Notice. Beginning January 1, 2026, the owner, manager, or operator of any property for which a rental license is required shall, at the inception of each tenancy, provide each tenant with information about the Philadelphia Rent Refund. Such information shall be included in the Partners in Good Housing Handbook, and the Department of Revenue, in consultation with the Department of Licenses and Inspections, is authorized to prepare and update the required materials.

§ 19-1312. Implementation of the Philadelphia Rent Refund

(1) Enrollment and Outreach.

(a) The Department of Revenue is authorized to take all measures deemed necessary to reduce and simplify processing requirements in providing the Philadelphia Rent Refund and to make all appropriate outreach efforts to improve awareness among individuals qualified to receive such refunds.

(b) The Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity is authorized to make all appropriate outreach efforts to improve awareness among individuals qualified to receive the Philadelphia Rent Refund and to assist qualifying individuals in completing applications for the Pennsylvania Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program.

powered by Legistar™

(2) Reporting. On September 1 of each year, the Department of Revenue shall provide a report to the Chief Clerk of Council setting forth, for the preceding 12 months: the number of individuals receiving the Philadelphia Rent Refund; the average amount of such refunds; the total amount refunded; an estimate of the total number of additional taxpayers eligible for refunds who have not applied.

(3) Procedures. The Department of Revenue is authorized to, within ninety (90) days of the date that this Section 19-1 <https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/philadelphia/latest/philadelphia_pa/0-0-0-298404>311 first becomes law, develop procedures and forms whereby the persons entitled to refunds under this Section can obtain the relief specified herein. The first such rent refunds shall be made no sooner than July 1, 2026, nor later than September 30, 2026.

SECTION 2. Title 9 of The Philadelphia Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

TITLE 9. REGULATION OF BUSINESSES, TRADES AND PROFESSIONS.

* * *

CHAPTER 9-800. LANDLORD AND TENANT.

* * *

§ 9-815. Rent Certificate.

(1) For purposes of this Section, the following terms have the following meanings:

(b) Application. An application for the Pennsylvania Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue.

(c) Rent Certificate. The standard certification form (PA-1000 RC) or successor form prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue for purposes of verifying rent paid.

(2) Duty to Provide Rent Certificate.

(a) Upon written or oral request by a tenant or former tenant, a landlord shall complete and sign a Rent Certificate verifying the total rent received for the applicable claim year.

(b) The landlord shall return the completed Rent Certificate to the tenant within ten (10) business days of the request.

(3) Form of Certification. The Rent Certificate shall be in the form prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue. If the Department prescribes a successor form, the landlord shall comply with such successor form.

(4) Alternative Documentation. In the event that the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue accepts other documentation in lieu of a signed Rent Certificate (including but not limited to a Rental Occupancy Affidavit or tenant proof of payment), the landlord shall cooperate with reasonable requests necessary for the tenant to complete the Application.

(5) Retaliation. A landlord shall not take any retaliatory action against a tenant for requesting or

powered by Legistar™

using a Rent Certificate. Retaliatory action shall include but not be limited to refusal to renew a lease, termination of tenancy, or increase in rent. Retaliatory conduct under this Section shall constitute an unfair rental practice enforceable before the Fair Housing Commission as described in § 9-804 ("Unfair Rental Practices").

(6) Private Right of Action.

(a) Any tenant aggrieved by a landlord's failure to provide a completed Rent Certificate within the time period required under subsection § 9-815(2)(b) shall have a cause of action against the landlord in a court of competent jurisdiction in addition to any other remedies available under this Title.

(b) Remedies. A prevailing tenant shall be entitled to:

(.1) Actual damages;

(.2) Statutory damages in the amount of not less than $200 and not more than $2,000 per violation;

(.3) Attorneys' fees and costs; and

(.4) Injunctive or other equitable relief, including an order compelling completion and return of the Rent Certificate.

(c) Each failure to timely provide a Rent Certificate upon request by a tenant shall constitute a separate violation.

SECTION 3. This ordinance is effective January 1, 2026.

powered by Legistar™